

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 DAMASCUS 0088

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, SY
SUBJECT: DE BORCHGRAVE'S JANUARY 4 INTERVIEW WITH PRES. ASSAD

1. DE BORCHGRAVE (NEWSWEEK) HAS PROVIDED US UNEDITED TEXT OF HIS JAN 4 EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ASSAD. IT HAS NOT RECEIVED FINAL PRESIDENCY APPROVAL. DE BORCHGRAVE REQUESTS IT BE PROTECTED FULLY UNTIL PUBLICATION (EXPECTED MONDAY, JAN. 10). THIS IS FIRST INTERVIEW ACCORDED BY ASSAD TO A US JOURNALIST SINCE SADAT'S VISIT TO ISRAEL. FULL TEXT FOLLOWS:

Q. PRESIDENT SADAT HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF TREASON BY PALESTINIAN, IRAQI, LIBYAN, ALGERIAN, SOUTH YEMENI AND SYRIAN AUTHORITIES. WHAT HAS BEEN TREASONABLE IN HIS POLICIES THUS FAR? WASN'T HIS KNESSET SPEECH THE KIND OF STATEMENT YOU YOURSELF WOULD HAVE MADE AT A GENEVA CONFERENCE?

A. WELL, HE WENT TO ISRAEL WHICH MEANT THE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL. HE WENT TO OCCUPIED JERUSALEM WHICH MEANT THE RECOGNITION OF JERUSALEM AS THE UNIFIED CAPITAL OF ISRAEL.
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HE BROKE ARAB SOLIDARITY AND DEALT SEPARATELY AND ALONE WITH AFFAIRS THAT CONCERN THE WHOLE REGION WHICH HE HAD NO RIGHT TO DO. AND HE DESTROYED EFFORTS FOR PEACE WHICH WERE ON THE WAY TO BEING FRUITFUL. BY DOING ALL OF THIS, HE GAVE UP THE PROCESS OF PEACE AND SHIFTED TO CAPITULATION. HE WEAKENED THE ARAB STAND AND ACTED AGAINST THE DESIRES AND ASPIRATIONS OF ARAB MASSES. THESE ARE

SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MEANINGS OF SADAT'S VISIT. WHEN HE CAME TO SEE ME BEFORE GOING TO ISRAEL, I WARNED HIM HE WOULD GET NOTHING OUT OF IT AND AFTER HE LEFT I TOLD OUR PARTY LEADERSHIP NOT TO EXPECT ANYTHING TO MATERIALIZE. ANOTHER PIECE OF LAND IN SINAI MEANS NOTHING. WHAT IS VITAL IS THAT ARAB LAND SHOULD BE RETURNED TO US WITH DIGNITY. THESE ARE THE LESSONS OF HISTORY.

2. Q. SADAT REITERATED AGAIN THIS WEEK THERE CAN BE NO COMPROMISE ON TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ARAB LAND OCCUPIED IN 1967. ISN'T THAT IDENTICAL TO YOUR OWN POSITION?
A. THIS IS NOT TRUE. WHAT HE SAYS IS ONE THING AND WHAT HE DOES QUITE ANOTHER. SADAT IS NOW ON THE WAY TO A SEPARATE DEAL. THE ROAD HE HAS CHOSEN CAN ONLY LEAD TO SUCH A DEAL. DO NOT CONFUSE A SEPARATE AGREEMENT WITH AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT AND REAL PEACE IN THE AREA. WHEN HE WENT TO JERUSALEM HE HAD IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND THAT THERE WOULD BE SUCH AN OUTCOME. HE IS MERELY PAVING THE WAY -- HIS DISCLAIMERS NOTWITHSTANDING. AND THIS IS WHAT MADE ME SAY TO HIM THAT HIS TRIP TO ISRAEL WOULD DESTROY THE PEACE EFFORTS FOR WHICH WE HAD ALL LABORED SO LONG.

3. Q. SADAT'S STAND ON A PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA HAS SURELY BEEN CONSISTENT WITH WHAT YOU YOURSELF HAVE TOLD ME IN RECENT YEARS WAS YOUR OWN POSITION?
A. WORDS ARE ONE THING, DEEDS ANOTHER. OF COURSE WE ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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IN FAVOR OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN STATE, JUST AS WE ARE IN FAVOR OF THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO ITS CREATION. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER SADAT HAS TAKEN THE RIGHT APPROACH. HE QUITE CLEARLY HAS NOT -- AND HE KNOWS IT.

4. Q. AM I CORRECT IN ASSUMING THAT YOU SHARE SADAT'S OVERALL CONCEPT OF PEACE -- A RETURN TO THE 1967 BORDERS WITH PROPER GUARANTEES, INCLUDING DEMILITARIZED ZONES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FRONTIER, EARLY WARNING STATIONS, ETCETERA, AND A PALESTINIAN STATE IN RETURN FOR REAL PEACE, OR AT LEAST THE KIND OF NON-BELLIGERENCY WE SEE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST EUROPE TODAY?
A. I THINK YOU SHOULD TURN THE QUESTION AROUND. DOES SADAT SHARE WITH US THE VIEW THAT PEACE SHOULD BE BASED ON COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND THE RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, IN THEIR OWN STATE, AND THAT ALL THIS SHOULD BE ACHIEVED THROUGH JOINT AND COLLECTIVE ARAB MOVEMENT? THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE BY NOT BOWING IN FRONT OF THE ENEMY AND BY MAINTAINING THE POSSIBILITY OF USING VARIOUS LEGITIMATE MEANS TO RESTORE OUR RIGHTS IN FULL -- IN OTHER WORDS, REAL PEACE. GOALS AND MEANS ARE COMPLEMENTARY. ONE CANNOT VIEW PEACE

IN ISOLATION FROM THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO IT. PEACE IS AN HONORABLE GOAL AND THE PATH WE FOLLOW SHOULD LIKEWISE BE HONORABLE. THE WAY SADAT BEHAVED WAS INCONSISTENT AND INCOMPATIBLE WITH THIS CONCEPT.

5. Q. EVER SINCE SINAI TWO IN SEPTEMBER 1975, YOU HAVE BEEN APPREHENSIVE ABOUT SINAI THREE, OR A SEPARATE PEACE BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL NOW THAT SADAT HAS REFUSED AN ISRAELI OFFER OF COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI WITHIN FIVE YEARS, AND IS HOLDING OUT FOR A REAL PALESTINIAN STATE, AS OPPOSED TO HOME RULE, AND THE COMPLETE EVACUATION OF ISRAELI TROOPS FROM THE WEST BANK, WHY DON'T YOU CLOSE RANKS WITH EGYPT? SADAT, INCIDENTALLY, HAS CATEGORICALLY AND REPEATEDLY REJECTED THE IDEA OF AN ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT
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AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT.

A. ALL THAT FLOATS ON THE SURFACE NOW IS PURE THEATRICS WITH THE AIM OF HIDING THE REALITIES AND MISLEADING THE ARAB MASSES. WHAT IS PRESENTLY GOING ON IS SOMETHING THAT WILL LEAD TO A SINAI AGREEMENT COUPLED WITH A COSMETIC FORMULA ON THE WEST BANK DESIGNED TO LIQUIDATE THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION.

6. Q. WHAT HAS SADAT GIVEN AWAY THAT HE CANNOT RETRIEVE? THE WAR OPTION?

A. HE HAS GIVEN UP BOTH THE WAR AND THE PEACE OPTIONS.

7. Q. IN OTHER WORDS, HE HAS OPTED FOR NO-WAR-NO-PEACE?

A. THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST DOES NOT DEPEND ONLY ON WHAT SADAT SAYS OR DOES. I FEAR THAT MAYBE YOU ARE INFLUENCED BY WHAT SADAT REITERATES FREQUENTLY WHEN HE SAYS EGYPT IS THE KEY TO WAR AND PEACE IN THE AREA. OF COURSE WE ARE PROUD OF EGYPT AND ITS ROLE IN THE PAST. HOWEVER, SADAT'S STATEMENT THAT THE RULER OF EGYPT HAS IN HIS HANDS THE POWER OF DECISION FOR WAR AND PEACE LACKS CONVINCING EVIDENCE. THE HISTORY OF OUR REGION -- ANCIENT AND MODERN -- GIVES THE LIE TO THIS CONTENTION. OTHERWISE WE WOULD HAVE HAD TO AVOID ANY ARGUMENT ON SADAT'S BEHAVIOR AND ACCEPT WHAT HE HAS DONE WITHOUT ANY DISCUSSION. YOU SHOULD NOT FORGET THAT SYRIA IS THE CRADLE OF ARAB NATIONALISM. WE HAVE NEVER CAPITULATED, FROM THE DAYS OF THE CRUSADERS TO MODERN ZIONIST EXPANSIONISM.

8. Q. SADAT SAYS WE MUST ABANDON THE STERILE POLICY OF ALL OR NOTHING, THAT THERE MUST BE GIVEN-AND-TAKE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. ISN'T THAT THE ESSENCE OF COMMONSENSICAL, REASONABLE POLICY IN AN AGE WHEN SMALL CONFLICTS CAN
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QUICKLY ESCALATE INTO MAJOR CONFRONTATIONS AND CONFLAGRATIONS?

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 4 DAMASCUS 0088

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y T E X T

A. TELL ME, WHEN HE SAYS THIS IS HE ADDRESSING
HIMSELF TO THE ARABS OR TO THE ISRAELIS?

9. Q. I THINK TO BOTH SIDES.

A. I FEEL THAT WHEN HE ADDRESSES SUCH STATEMENTS TO
ARABS HE IS ABUSING THEM AND HE IS CONDEMNING THE WHOLE
ARAB STRUGGLE OF THE LAST 30 YEARS. THE QUESTION NOW IS
ONE OF RIGHTS OR NO RIGHTS AND ONE CANNOT SURRENDER WHAT
IS RIGHT, NOR CAN SADAT ACCEPT WHAT I KNOW HE BELIEVES IS
NOT RIGHT.

10. Q. SADAT, FOR EXAMPLE, RECOGNIZED THAT ISRAEL, LIKE
ITS ARAB NEIGHBORS, HAS LEGITIMATE SECURITY CONCERNS. DO
YOU AGREE?

A. JUDGING FROM TANGIBLE EVIDENCE, SUCH AS THE EXPANSION
OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, WE
CONCLUDE THAT ISRAEL HAS EXPANSIONIST CONCERNS MORE THAN

IT HAS SECURITY CONCERNS. AND THE PROOF IS WHAT ISRAEL IS
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PUTTING FORWARD AND DEMANDING UNDER THE HEADING OF
SECURITY, THE KIND OF DEMANDS THAT ARE NOT MADE BY ANY OTHER
COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, REGARDLESS OF ITS SIZE.

11. Q. IF YOU ARE FEARFUL OF EGYPT GOING IT ALONE AND
SPLITTING IRREVOCABLY THE CONFRONTATION STATES, WHY DON'T
YOU AND JORDAN JOIN EGYPT IN THE CURRENT
NEGOTIATIONS, INSTEAD OF DISTANCING YOURSELF FROM
EGYPT AS YOU HAVE BEEN DOING?

A. BECAUSE WE HAVE OPTED FOR THE ROAD TO PEACE, NOT WAR.

12. Q. SADAT'S ROUTE WILL LEAD TO WAR?

A. IT DOES NOT LEAD TO PEACE.

13. Q. TWO NEGOTIATING COMMITTEES ARE GETTING UNDERWAY
AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL IN BOTH CAIRO AND JERUSALEM.
THESE ARE NEW FACTS, WHERE DO YOU SEE THIS PROCESS GOING
AND WHY DID YOUR FOREIGN MINISTER REJECT IN ADVANCE ANY-
THING THAT COMES OUT OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS?

A. ONE CANNOT CONSTRUCT A STRONG BUILDING ON A WEAK
FOUNDATION. WRONG BEGINNINGS LEAD TO WRONG CONCLUSIONS.
THEREFORE ONE CANNOT EXPECT ANYTHING USEFUL OR BENEFICIAL
TO A JUST PEACE FROM SUCH COMMITTEES OR ANY SIMILAR FORMULA
WHICH MAY BE ARRANGED THROUGH THIS PROCESS.

14. Q. SADAT SAYS HE HOPES TO PRODUCE THE PAPER WORK THAT
WILL ENABLE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE TO GET RIGHT TO THE HEART
OF THE MATTER -- THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECURITY COUNCIL
RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A
PALESTINIAN STATE. WHY DON'T YOU GIVE HIM THE BENEFIT
OF THE DOUBT?

A. SADAT HIMSELF KNOWS FULL WELL THAT WHAT HE HAS BEEN DOING
IS TO CLOSE THE DOOR TO A GENEVA CONFERENCE BECAUSE IT
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CANNOT BE USED AS A COVER FOR SEPARATE DEALS WHICH ARE
NOW BEING CONCLUDED BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE DARK.

15. Q. WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE JORDAN PLAYING ON THE ROAD TO
AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT?

A. JORDAN, AS ONE OF THE CONFRONTATION STATES, HAS A
ROLE IN THE CONTEXT OF AN OVERALL COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT.
PEACE CANNOT BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT ARAB UNANIMITY. BUT I DO

NOT SEE A ROLE FOR JORDAN TO PLAY UNDER THE SHADOW OF SEPARATE DEALS.

16. Q. FOR YEARS YOU AND SADAT HAVE WANTED A PALESTINIAN SOLUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF A PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, CLOSELY LINKED TO JORDAN. IS THAT STILL YOUR POSITION?

A. I SAID IN THE PAST AND REPEAT NOW WE WILL ACCEPT ANYTHING AGREED UPON BETWEEN THE PALESTINIANS AND THE JORDANIANS.

17. Q. WITH THE PLO HARDENING ITS POSITION AND MOVING TOWARD GEORGE HABASH'S PFLP, THEY ARE NOT BRINGING THE PROSPECTS OF A PALESTINIAN STATE ANY NEARER. IF THE PLO WANTS TO ENTER THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, SHOULDN'T IT BE RETHINKING ITS POSITION?

A. FACED WITH CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS, IT SEEMS TO ME THE PLO IS LEFT WITH BUT A SINGLE CHOICE -- NAMELY TO CONSOLIDATE NATIONAL PALESTINIAN UNITY AND TO REINFORCE ITS STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE AN INDEPENDENT STATE.

18. Q. AN ARMED STRUGGLE?

A. I DO NOT MEAN THAT STRUGGLE IS BY FORCE OF ARMS ONLY. STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL CAUSES THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAS NEVER BEEN BY ARMED FORCE ALONE BUT HAS TAKEN ON VARIOUS FORMS -- MILITARY, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND OTHERWISE. IN ANY EVENT, I'M NOT TRYING TO DETERMINE FOR THE PALESTINIANS HOW THEY SHOULD CONDUCT THEIR STRUGGLE. THIS IS THE PLO'S CONFIDENTIAL

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RESPONSIBILITY.

19. Q. BEGIN SAYS HE WILL NEGOTIATE ANYTHING EXCEPT ISRAEL'S DESTRUCTION -- AND SINCE HE MAINTAINS THAT THE PLO SEEKS ISRAEL'S ANNIHILATION, HE WON'T DEAL WITH THAT ORGANIZATION. DO YOU BELIEVE THE PLO STANDS FOR ISRAEL'S DESTRUCTION?

A. LET HIM ADDRESS HIMSELF TO THE PLO. LET HIM SAY TO THE PLO'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE "I WANT TO NEGOTIATE WITH YOU BUT NOT ON THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL" AND LET HIM HEAR THEIR ANSWER.

20. Q. WILL BEGIN THEN BE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED?

A. THIS IS THE BUSINESS OF THE PLO AND ISRAEL, NOT MINE.

21. Q. AFTER SINAI TWO YOU TOLD ME PALESTINIAN GUERRILLAS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO LAUNCH RAIDS INTO ISRAEL FROM SYRIAN TERRITORY BUT NONE TOOK PLACE. THIS AUTHORIZATION HAS BEEN REPEATED BY SOME OF YOUR MINISTERS RECENTLY. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION?

A. THE SAME PERMISSION STANDS. BUT WE HAVE TO REMEMBER

THE ISRAELI MILITARY MEASURES FACING THE SYRIAN FRONT HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VERY VIGILANT SO PERHAPS THE REASON WHY RAIDS HAVE NOT TAKEN PLACE IS TECHNICAL.

22. Q. HOW MANY PALESTINIANS DO YOU BELIEVE A WEST BANK-GAZA STATE COULD ABSORB IN ADDITION TO 1.1 MILLION ALREADY LIVING THERE?

A. MAYBE NOT A LARGER NUMBER BUT THAT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY ANYWAY BECAUSE UNDER U.N. RESOLUTIONS REFUGEES SHOULD HAVE THE CHOICE OF COMPENSATION OR RETURNING TO THEIR DWELLINGS FROM WHICH THEY WERE EVICTED IN 1948.

23. Q. IF YOU WERE IN ISRAEL'S SHOES WOULD YOU WITHDRAW
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BEFORE YOU KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE PORTENDS ON THE WEST BANK?

A. THIS IS AN IMPOSSIBLE HYPOTHESIS BECAUSE IT IS NOT CONCEIVABLE THAT I WOULD EVER BE IN ISRAEL'S SHOES FOR I CANNOT IMAGINE MYSELF OCCUPYING THE LANDS OF OTHERS AND DISPLACING PEOPLE FROM THEIR HOMES BECAUSE OF THEIR RACE OR RELIGION AND THEN REFUSING TO WITHDRAW FROM OCCUPIED LANDS DESPITE THE EXISTENCE OF U.N. RESOLUTIONS REQUIRING ME TO WITHDRAW. AFTER ALL, UNDER WHAT RIGHT CAN ISRAEL DETERMINE THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK? IS THERE ANY STATE IN THE WORLD WHICH HAS THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK? IS THERE ANY STATE IN THE WORLD WHICH HAS THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY AND FUTURE OF LANDS BELONGING TO A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY?

24. Q. I WAS THINKING IN TERMS OF SECURITY CONCERNS. WOULD YOU, FOR EXAMPLE, WITHDRAW YOUR TROOPS FROM LEBANON BEFORE MAKING SURE THERE WOULD BE NO RECURRENCE OF THE CIVIL WAR YOU WENT IN TO END? WOULDN'T YOU WANT TO MAKE SURE OF WHAT THE FUTURE PORTENDS BEFORE LEAVING?

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 4 DAMASCUS 0088

EXDIS

A. HAD THERE BEEN A REQUEST FROM LEBANON FOR US TO
WITHDRAW WE WOULD HAVE WITHDRAWN IMMEDIATELY. THEY NEED
US. THE PALESTINIANS DO NOT NEED ISRAELI OCCUPATION TROOPS
AND HAVE MADE THAT VERY CLEAR FROM THEIR RESISTANCE
AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. WE AND
LEBANON ARE ONE AND THE SAME PEOPLE. WE WENT INTO
LEBANON TO PUT AN END TO A CIVIL WAR. ISRAEL DID NOT
GO INTO THE WEST BANK FOR THE SAME REASONS.

25. Q. HOW WOULD YOU GUARANTEE THAT SUCH A MINI-STATE
WOULD COEXIST PEACEFULLY WITH ALL ITS NEIGHBORS? WITHIN
A CONFEDERAL STRUCTURE WITH JORDAN? OR WITH JORDAN AND
ISRAEL? OR WITHIN A LARGER ARAB CONFEDERATION WITH JORDAN,
SYRIA AND LEBANON?

A. ANY FORM OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THIS PALESTINIAN
STATE AND THE REST OF THE ARAB COUNTRIES WOULD DEPEND ON THE
DECISION OF THE LEADERSHIP OF THAT STATE AND OTHER CONCERNED
LEADERS. THIS IS BY NO MEANS AN UNSOLVABLE PROBLEM.

26. Q. THERE IS NO FIRM AGREED ARAB NEGOTIATING POSITION
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ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, ONLY THAT THE ISRAELIS SHOULD
WITHDRAW COMPLETELY IN RETURN FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRE-
JUNE 1967, BORDERS, AND SECURITY GUARANTEES. THE PALESTINIANS
SHOULD THEN BE FREE TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN FUTURE STATUS, FREE
OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION. ALL THAT IS RATHER VAGUE. AND
GIVEN YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE IN LEBANON, SURELY ONE CANNOT BLAME
ANYONE FOR NOT WANTING TO TAKE CHANCES ON THE WEST BANK,
CAN ONE?

A. WHAT IS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ISIDIOUS
COMPARISON THAT YOU HAVE JUST MADE? I DON'T SEE THE ASPECT
OF VAGUENESS IN WHAT YOU HAVE OUTLINED. IT IS ALL VERY
CLEAR. PERHAPS YOU MEAN THE NON-DEFINITION OF THE PALESTINIAN
NEGOTIATING PARTNER. BUT THAT HAS ALSO BEEN DECIDED. THE
ARABS UNANIMOUSLY DECIDED AT THE RABAT SUMMIT IN 1974

THAT THE PLO IS THE SOLE PARTY AUTHORIZED TO NEGOTIATE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. THERE IS NOTHING VAGUE ABOUT THAT. NEGOTIATIONS THEREFORE MUST TAKE PLACE BETWEEN THE PLO AND ISRAEL.

27. Q. IF THE ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES DO NOT AGREE WITH BEGIN'S 26-POINT PEACE PLAN, DON'T YOU THINK IT'S NOW INCUMBENT UPON ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS TO COME UP WITH THEIR OWN PEACE PLAN?

A. WE HAVE COME UP WITH OUR PEACE PLAN SINCE THE 1973 WAR. WE SAID REAL PEACE MEANS WITHDRAWAL FROM TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967, RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS AND THE END OF THE STATE OF WAR. NOTHING COULD BE CLEARER. AND WE WERE READY TO GO TO GENEVA TO IMPLEMENT THIS WHEN SADAT WENT OFF ON A TANGENT.

28. Q. THE ISRAELIS HAVE LEFT THE DOOR OPEN TO SELF-DETERMINATION ON THE WEST BANK IN THE FUTURE AND THEY HAVE NOT REJECTED WITHDRAWAL IN PRINCIPLE AFTER A FIXED PERIOD
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OF TIME. ISN'T THAT WORTH EXPLORING?

A. THESE ARE STATEMENTS THAT I AM NOT AWARE OF BUT WHAT IS KNOWN TO US AND WHAT IS CERTAIN IS THAT ISRAEL HAS NO INTENTION OF WITHDRAWING FROM ALL THE TERRITORIES TAKEN OVER IN 67 AND INSISTS ON STAYING IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. IT EVEN SAYS THAT THESE TERRITORIES ARE PART OF GREATER ISRAEL WHILE PRETENDING TO LEAVE THE QUESTION OF FINAL SOVEREIGNTY FOR THE FUTURE. THIS WAS STRESSED BY THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES THEMSELVES DURING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. AND WHAT IS KNOWN OF THE BEGIN PLAN CONFIRMS THIS. SO I THINK YOU ARE MISINFORMED.

29. Q. OPPONENTS, ADVERSARIES, EVEN ENEMIES, ARE TALKING TO EACH OTHER ALL OVER THE WORLD. WHY SHOULDN'T ARABS AND ISRAELIS?

A. AFTER THE 1973 WAR THE ARABS ACCEPTED AND AGREED TO NEGOTIATE ON THE BASIS OF U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS AND UNDER THE U.N. UMBRELLA. SO WE HAVE NOT REFUSED TO TALK. IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WAS CONCEIVED UNDER THE COCHAIRMANSHIP OF THE TWO SUPERPOWERS. HOWEVER, WHAT IS UNDERWAY NOW IS VERY FAR FROM THIS CONCEPT AND ALSO FAR REMOVED FROM INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY AND U.N. RESOLUTIONS.

30. Q. WHAT EXACTLY ARE THE ARABS GENERALLY AND SYRIA IN PARTICULAR PREPARED TO DO ABOUT PEACE TODAY?

A. WE HAVE NOTHING MORE TO DO NOW THAN WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY DONE SINCE 1973. THAT STILL STANDS. IT IS MY VIEW THAT INTERACTIONS AND REACTIONS ARE TAKING PLACE

IN THE REGION AND WITH TIME THESE WILL SHAKE DOWN INTO THEIR FINAL SHAPE. THE MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE IS NOW AT A STANDSTILL. THIS MAY CONTINUE FOR A TIME PERIOD WHICH IS DIFFICULT TO MEASURE NOW. IT IS ALSO DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE IN WHAT WAY THIS MOVEMENT WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT PEACE REMAINS OUR GOAL AND WE SHALL CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR IT AS MUCH AS WE

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CAN -- BUT IT MUST BE A JUST ONE IN THE FULL SENSE OF THE WORD.

31. Q. THEY WHY DID YOU JOIN THE REJECTIONIST FRONT COUNTRIES AT THE RECENT TRIPOLI SUMMIT IN LIBYA?

A. WHAT TOOK PLACE WAS DEFINITELY NOT A REJECTIONIST FRONT. IT WAS THE FRONT OF ARAB STEADFASTNESS. WE DECIDED NOT TO RETREAT IN THE FACE OF THE ZIONIST OFFENSIVE AND PERSEVERE BECAUSE THE MOVES NOW TAKING PLACE IN THE REGION EMBODY A CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE ARAB NATION WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF IMPOSING CAPITULATION ON IT. AND WE WILL NOT ALLOW THIS CONSPIRACY TO PASS. WE WILL DEFEAT IT. IN THE FIRST ARTICLE OF OUR STATEMENT AT THE END OF THE TRIPOLI SUMMIT, WE SAID THAT SADAT HAD DESTROYED PEACE EFFORTS. WE DID NOT SAY WE WERE AGAINST PEACE. THEREFORE, THERE ARE NO REJECTIONIST STATES.

32. Q. YOUR INFORMATION MINISTER TOLD ME LAST NIGHT THAT HE WAS CONVINCED WASHINGTON HAD ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE. I TRIED TO DISABUSE HIM OF THIS NOTION. HE ALSO CONCLUDED THAT BY BACKING SADAT, THE U.S. MUST HAVE REALIZED THE REPERCUSSIONS IN THE REGION AND THEREFORE THE US MUST BE IN FAVOR OF A NO WAR NO PEACE SITUATION. DOES THIS MEAN THAT YOU FEEL THE US ROLE OF "HONEST INTERMEDIARY," WHICH YOU PRAISED WHEN I LAST SAW YOU IN JULY, HAS BEEN OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS?

A. WELL, US BACKING OF SADAT'S MOVES DOES NOT SERVE THE CAUSE OF PEACE. AND IT APPEARS THAT THE US IS NOW CONFINING ITS OWN MOVES AND ROLE TO THE FRAMEWORK OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE. THAT IS OBVIOUS TO ANY OBSERVER AND NOT AT ALL HELPFUL IF THE AIM IS TO BRING ABOUT A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT.

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33. Q. WHAT IS SAUDI ARABIA'S POSITION? I HEAR THE SAUDIS ARE MORE THAN A LITTLE UPSET TO SEE YOU NOW LINE UP WITH

LIBYA AND RUSSIA AND OTHER HARDLINERS IN THE AREA, SUCH AS IRAQ?

A. OUR RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA ARE VERY GOOD. IT WAS CLEAR SAUDI LEADERS HAD NO ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT SADAT HAD BEEN PLANNING AND DID NOT SUPPORT HIS TRIP TO ISRAEL. THEY ARE AGAINST ANY MOVE THAT SPLITS ARAB SOLIDARITY. WHEN I MET WITH OUR SAUDI BROTHERS A FEW DAYS AGO A MOST FRATERNAL ATMOSPHERE PREVAILED. THERE IS NOTHING THAT COULD DISRUPT THE GOOD RELATIONS AND COOPERATION BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.

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EXDIS

34. Q. LIBYA, I HAVE BEEN TOLD BY THE SAUDIS, HAS AGREED TO FUND YOUR NEW PURCHASES OF SOVIET EQUIPMENT AND MR. BREZHNEV HAS APPARENTLY AGREED TO MEET ALL YOUR DEFENSE NEEDS. I TAKE IT THEN THAT ALL YOUR DIFFERENCES WITH MOSCOW HAVE NOW BEEN RESOLVED, AM I CORRECT IN ASSUMING THAT MOSCOW WANTS TO HEAD OFF THE KIND OF OVERALL SETTLEMENT THEY CONSIDER FAVORABLE TO THE WEST?

A. THE BEST WAY TO PUT IT IS THAT WE HAVE SIMPLY STOOD AGAINST CURRENT MOVES WHICH AIM AT IMPOSING CAPITULATION ON THE ARABS AND THE LIQUIDATION OF THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE. IT HAPPENS THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS SHARED THE SAME VISION AND CONCEPT AS WE HAVE AND THAT OUR EXPLANATIONS OF SADAT'S MOVES ARE IDENTICAL. IT IS ON THIS BASIS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE SUPPORTED US BUT THEY DID NOT TELL US THAT THEY WERE BACKING OR OPPOSING A SOLUTION THAT WAS FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE

TO THE WEST. THE SOVIETS HAVE ALWAYS SAID THAT THEY FAVOR A JUST OVERALL SETTLEMENT THAT CAN BRING REAL PEACE. AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE SEEKING, TOO.

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35. Q. THE IRAQIS HAVE SUGGESTED AN IRAQ-SYRIA-PLO CONFRONTATION TREATY AGAINST ISRAEL. TWO OF THESE PARTIES ARE AGAINST U.N. RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 WHILE YOU TELL ME YOU SUPPORT THEM. SO HOW COULD SUCH A TREATY WORK?

A. THIS MUST NOT PREVENT THE FORMATION OF A COMMON FRONT AMONG THE THREE PARTIES. IN 1973, SYRIA AND EGYPT FOUGHT UNDER THE SAME COMMAND AT A TIME WHEN EGYPT HAD ALREADY ACCEPTED 242 AND SYRIA HAD NOT. AND AFTER THE 1967 WAR, WE FORMED AN EASTERN FRONT--SYRIA, IRAQ AND JORDAN-- AT A TIME WHEN SYRIA AND IRAQ REFUSED 242 AND JORDAN ACCEPTED IT. BOTH THE EASTERN AND WESTERN FRONTS WERE UNDER THE SAME EGYPTIAN COMMAND, SO THERE WAS NO INCOMPATIBILITY.

36. Q. WHAT WOULD BE THE POINT OF ANOTHER ANTI-SADAT SUMMIT SO SOON AFTER TRIPOLI, AS PROPOSED BY ALGERIA?

A. WE ARE NOW IN THE COURSE OF WORKING FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE NATIONAL ARAB STEADFASTNESS FRONT WHICH WE FORMED AT TRIPOLI. THE EXACT DETAILS OF WHAT WILL BE DISCUSSED AT THE NEW SUMMIT ARE NOW BEING CONSIDERED IN BILATERAL MEETINGS, SUCH AS THE ONES PRESIDENT BOUMEDIEENE CONDUCTED IN BAGHDAD AND DAMASCUS THIS WEEK.

37. Q. BEHIND THE PLO, SAY WESTERN CRITICS, STAND SUCH RADICAL STATES AS SYRIA, IRAQ, LIBYA AND SOUTH YEMEN AND BEHIND THESE STATES STANDS THE SOVIET UNION. THIS IS THE LINE OF SUBVERSION, THEY ARGUE, THAT MOSCOW HOPES TO ESTABLISH CLOSE TO THE OIL JUGULAR OF WEST EUROPE, THE U.S. AND JAPAN. DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE IN SUCH AN ALLIANCE?

A. THE SOVIET UNION IS MERELY STANDING ON OUR SIDE FOR OUR STRUGGLE TO LIBERATE THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND TO

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ENSURE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. NO MORE, NO LESS. THE ASSESSMENT OF THIS STAND BY ALL THOSE CONCERNED WITH PEACE IN THE REGION, WHETHER THEY ARE IN EUROPE OR THE U.S., SHOULD BE A POSITIVE ONE.

38. Q. SADAT SAID LAST WEEK THAT SYRIA DOES WHAT RUSSIA WANTS AND THE PLO - HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON BOTH RUSSIA AND SYRIA -- DOES WHAT SYRIA WANTS. THAT MAKES IT VERY DIFFICULT, ADDED SADAT, FOR EGYPT'S PEACE INITIATIVE TO OBTAIN SUPPORT -- ESPECIALLY THE SUPPORT OF THE VERY ARAB PALESTINIANS FOR WHOM SADAT SAYS HE IS DETERMINED TO OBTAIN LEGITIMATE RIGHTS AS THE CORE OF A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

A. SADAT KNOWS BETTER THAN ANYBODY ELSE THAT WE IN SYRIA, AS OPPOSED TO SOME OTHER COUNTRIES, HAVE THE FULL FREEDOM OF OUR DECISIONS. THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLES TO PROVE THIS WHICH THE WHOLE WORLD KNOWS ABOUT. I WISH SADAT COULD BE OBJECTIVE WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT SUCH MATTERS SO THAT HE MAY DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FRIENDSHIPS THAT EXIST BETWEEN STATES ON THE ONE HAND, AND SATELLITE RELATIONSHIPS ON THE OTHER. IT IS OUR RIGHT TO ASK WHETHER SADAT WITH HIS CONTINUING CAMPAIGN, COMPLEMENTARY TO HIS VISIT TO OCCUPIED JERUSALEM, INTENDS TO FURTHER WEAKEN THE ARABS BY REJECTING ALL THOSE WHO BACK OUR CAUSE? IT IS NOT ONE OF OUR ARAB CHARACTERISTICS TO BE UNGRATEFUL TO THOSE WHO SUPPORT US.

39. Q. HENRY KISSINGER SAYS THE DAY WILL COME WHEN ARAB LEADERS WHO NOW DENOUNCE THE SADAT INITIATIVE WILL BE GRATEFUL THAT THE LARGEST OF ARAB NATIONS TOOK ON ITS OWN SHOULDERS THE BURDEN OF THE FIRST AND MOST DIFFICULT STEP FOR PEACE.

A. OF COURSE I DO NOT THINK HE IS RIGHT. HAD WE HAD THE SAME VIEW WE WOULD NOT HAVE ADOPTED OUR PRESENT STAND AND THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO NEED TO TALK AS LONG AS WE HAVE.

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40. Q. YOUR FRIEND PRESIDENT NICOLAE CEAUSESCU OF ROMANIA WOULD NOT AGREE WITH YOU.

A. ROMANIA HAD NO ROLE WHATSOEVER IN ARRANGING SADAT'S VISIT TO ISRAEL AND NO ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE OF SADAT'S PLANS. THE NAME OF CEAUSESCU WAS CONVENIENTLY USED AS A COVER FOR THE REAL PARTIES WHICH PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN THIS SORDID AFFAIR. END TEXT.

42. COMMENT: WHAT SHOWS THROUGH MOST CLEARLY IN THIS DEPRESSING BUT HONEST GLIMPSE INTO ASSAD'S THINKING IS HIS BITTERNESS TOWARD SADAT AND HIS REFUSAL TO CONSIDER THAT ANYTHING POSITIVE MIGHT COME OUT OF THE SADAT INITIATIVE. HE BLUNTLY IGNORED SEVERAL OPENINGS DE BORCHGRAVE PROVIDED IN WHICH HE COULD HAVE EXPRESSED DESIRE TO REJOIN PEACE PROCESS IF IT SHOWED PROMISE. AT SAME TIME, HE REFUSED

TO BE BRANDED AS A REJECTIONIST ADHERING STRICTLY
TO MIDDLE GROUND OF "ARAB STEADFASTNESS" WHICH SUPPORTS A
PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT BUT ONLY AFTER ARAB UNITY HAS BEEN
RESTORED. FOR THE MOMENT, ASSAD SEEMS CONTENT TO REST ON
THE SIDELINES, CONFIDENT THAT ISRAEL WILL NOT GIVE
SADAT ENOUGH TO MEET MINIMUM ARAB DEMANDS. HE MAY HAVE
IT IN HIS POWER, OF COURSE, TO MAKE THIS A SELF-
FULFILLING PROPHECY. MEANWHILE, HE IS NEGOTIATING FOR
FURTHER SOVIET MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO BE PAID FOR,
APPARENTLY, WITH LIBYAN FUNDS AND AWAITING THE OUTCOME
OF BOUMEDIENE'S EFFORTS TO BRING IRAQ INTO THE TRIPOLI
FRONT, A DEVELOPMENT WHICH IN ASSAD'S VIEW CAN ONLY STRENGTHEN
HIS HAND IN THE DAYS AHEAD.

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